

WOW W-2 Community Steering Committee

Meeting Notes

December 7, 2010

Present: Jane Batha, Arbor E&T; Debra Wandsnider, Hebron House; Peter Schuler, Waukesha County DHS; Eileen Newby, Ozaukee County DHS; Lee Patzer, Waukesha County Economic Development Corporation; Glen Lewinski, Waukesha County Community Block Grant; Mark Poffinbarger, WI Dept. of Vocational Rehabilitation; Carol McGrath, Arbor

Jane began the meeting with introductions as some members were missing from the previous meeting. The minutes of the last meeting were shared.

Jane provided an agency update. She shared charts that indicated a severe uptick in the number of W-2 clients from January 2010 until September 2010. Although remaining very high, the numbers seem to have leveled off. There was some speculation this may show a slight upturn in the State's economy. Jane did share good news: There were two additional funding allocations by the Department of Children and Families which are intended to cover the increased caseload. The dollars are mostly service and admin dollars to assist agencies in providing the important services needed to assist clients toward self-sufficiency. The Department already made sure that benefit dollars would stretch to the end of the initial contract. In addition to the added funds, the Department unexpectedly extended all the agency's contracts for an additional year. Jane speculated that this was because there wasn't enough time for the new administration to create an RFP for the next contract period. Peter Schuler commented that it looked like the Department was trying to stabilize everything before the new administration took office. Peter Schuler and Mike Bloedorn indicated they'd heard rumors at a counties association meeting that Susan Dreyfus might be nominated to be DCF Secretary and that Kitty Rose from Green Bay might be considered for DHS Secretary.

Local news from Jane was that Arbor will not be renewing their sub-contract with the Kaiser Group for 2011. This was a corporate decision, but probably was based on the competitive nature of the two businesses and the RFP for the W-2 contract which was scheduled to be released in the spring (and is no longer an issue based on the contract extension). Jane has been busy interviewing and hiring 4 new staff. Two of the current Kaiser staff have been offered employment, the other two took different positions.

Another structural change is that Arbor will no longer be administering the Waukesha County Childcare Eligibility contract in 2011. DCF gave those funds to the counties.

Debra Wansnider asked what the status of the FSET program was. Jane indicated that the agency expects the same funding level as in 2010. Jane indicated that the voluntary nature of the program has created a caseload of individuals with significant disabilities and criminal backgrounds. She indicated that case managers are working closely with DVR and there are two case managers with significant experience working with the ex-offender population.

Jane reviewed the status of the agency's 2010 performance standards benchmarks. She indicated that Job Entry has been the highest in the state and that the Department has asked numerous times why the agency is doing so well. Jane's only explanation is that the agency follows W-2 policy and strongly encourages employment. In addition, perhaps the recession didn't impact the Waukesha County area as badly as others. We expect that we will pass the Success of Job Skills Training standard as we have 3 people in training. However, to reach the standard, they must become employed within 90 days of completing their program. The Educational Attainment benchmark is low due to needing to test people for a baseline score and then re-test before the end of the year. The agency has been busy identifying and testing clients for the standards. SSI/SSDI Attainment is doing fine. We have an SSI Advocate who is working with disabled clients and we are exceeding the standard at this time. Earnings Stabilization is measured when people retain their employment and make more money two quarters after they leave W-2 than they received on the program. We are meeting the standard. Wage at placement is not as high as the benchmark standard. The state assigned the amount, \$9.26/hr on average. Jane doubts that the program will reach that standard because wages at employment are not that high. Customer Satisfaction is always a strength of our agency and we are doing fine. The Federal Work Participation Rates are very high and have been a focus of the program. This rate is important as states that don't reach their goals are sanctioned monetarily. Indiana lost millions in the first round of sanctions. To date, Wisconsin is fine.

Jane indicated that she is active in the W-2 Coalition which has members from all types of W-2 agencies around the state. Recent discussions have been around what is the appropriate funding level for W-2 and how do small agencies deal with SSI applications. The Coalition is recommending a voluntary consortium of agencies be created to handle SSI applications. The most recent action by the Coalition was to write a letter to Governor elect, Scott Walker with specific suggestions for the W-2 program under his administration.

Arbor will be going through a Quality Service Review in February or March. Based on the child welfare quality service review model, the W-2 agency will be reviewed on how the clients are receiving services. The review will include other agencies that work with the clients as well as family members. The feedback from other agencies that have gone through it is its very labor and time intensive, but the feedback to the agency is excellent.

Member discussion about the impact of the election on the W-2 program proceeded. Jane indicated that W-2 began under a Republican administration, but it was much more work related and very much less focused on education. She indicated that the pendulum has swung back over the years and educational activities are encouraged. Peter Schuler expressed concern that the educational component might be purged by the new administration. Lee Patzer indicated that employers look for quality employees who can perform many functions such as working in teams or acting as leaders in their work. Jane indicated that over the past 15 years the emphasis has alternated between the job seeker needs and the employer needs. She said the last time a 4 year degree was part of anyone's plan was under the JOBS Program. Lee indicated that there are alternatives to 4 year programs such as on-line coursework and technical college classes. Peter indicated that we should be concerned about the number of our college graduates who are moving to surrounding states for their employment.

Jane thanked the group for their input and for attending. The next meeting is scheduled for July 12, 2011 at 1:30 p.m. in conference room 158 of the Pewaukee Workforce Development Center.